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SONGS OF INEXPERIENCE

BEATRICE DAW

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SONGS OF INEXPERIENCE

BY
BEATRICE DAW



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TO
MY MOTHER

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SONGS OF INEXPERIENCE

HYMN

O YE who walk among the darker ways,
The slaves of life, whose fettered hands must give
The coin of blood and sweat and crime that pays
Your tribute for the bitter right to live,
Whose brows have felt the brand of unsought sin,
Whose clouded eyes look forth the night within,—
Deep unto troubled voiceless deep responds,
Thou thwarted God in bonds!

O ye who dash your strength of heart and brain
Against the limits of the things that be,
Who challenge all the ancient laws of pain,
And fight for foothold nearer liberty,
Strong souls, upon the wings of whose desire
The race ascends, slow truth by truth the higher,
Take thou the praise wherewith my soul is thrilled,
God who would be fulfilled!

YOU, WHOM THEY BURIED

SOMETIMES, when I have lived a long day
through,—

A futile day of crowded sordid things,
Unmeaning tasks, and pin-prick sufferings,—
I let my tired spirit fly to you,
And on the tranquil height you lead it to,
Serene in you it rests, and, homing, brings
The comfort of your presence in its wings,
That, deep-renewed, I face the dawn anew.

Love, shall it be that at some evening-tide
I shall fare forth on the accustomed flight,
And on a sudden feel that I have died,
And drift upon dark space, uncharted night,—
Then hear the rustle of your robe beside,
And somehow know, and wing the way aright?

CHANCE RESISTANCE

*(In the time of the plague of the children, August,
1916.)*

GOLD blooms and red blooms,—
(So gay, so gay).
Lo, here a reaper
To cut his way.

Down drop the bright buds
Beneath the flail.
It bends not the white bloom
That seemed so frail.

RESIGNATION

WHEN God unwittingly has chanced to make
Some cruel, irretrievable mistake,
How it must grieve the baffled, yearning One,—
That ready slander of "Thy will be done."

A QUIET SUNSET

A PALE clear light that lingers on the leaves;
A gentler moment in the breezes' play;
Hushed twitter of the swallows in the eaves;
A shadow, and a calm,—the end of day.

IN NOVEMBER, IN A STRANGE CITY

I LIKE to close my eyes to the rain
And think of the buckwheat-field again.
The fair white slope of blossomy snow
Drifting down to the stream below,
Glowing and quivering, quickened through
By the straight hot light from the cloud-
less blue;
Wavering ripple of brightness and shade,
Running wherever the wind has played;
Murmuring drone of unnumbered bees;
Drenching honey-scent sweet on the breeze;
Warm deep glow of midsummer skies.—
Mine,—for an instant of closing eyes.

CLOUD-CHANGE AT SUNSET

BEHIND the rifts in wind-torn dusky skies,
Sudden the gold-rayed flames of sunset rise.
Is beauty grown a commonplace to God?—
Or can he too feel joyous sharp surprise?

CARPE DIEM

(*Horace, Carmina, I, 11.*)

SEEK not, Leuconœe, to know the day
The gods have set to bound thy life, or mine;
Nor try, through wise soothsayer's mystic sign,
To wrest the secrets of high Jove away.
Tempt not his wrath to learn his yea or nay,
But, whether hosts of years shall yet be thine
Or this the last that seas shall dash their brine
On hidden rocks,—the point is, to be gay!

I counsel wisdom,—let the wine be strained,
And spare thyself long hopes, for swift their
flight.

See, while I spoke, Time his advantage gained,—
With every word, a moment vanished quite.
Leave sober thinking for some far-off hour!
Now let us pluck the day's fast-fading flower.

KATHARSIS

BELOVÉD, on whose path the shadow fell,
I learn how loving shall be purified.
It is a cleansing thing to be denied
The solitude where you and sorrow dwell.

THE JESTER

I HAVE danced and shaken my bells,
And have piped my merriest lay ;
And the stars of my lady's eyes
Looked down on the jester's play.

“ 'Tis a willing fool,” she said,
As her lover drew her away,
And my lady smiled on the fool.—
A smile is a jester's pay.

WITHHELD

You in your strength looked down, and saw me
stand

Before the portal of the long-sought land.

You flung it wide, that I might pass within,—

But, passing, might not even touch your hand.

MIST-BOUND

BEHIND, the lights of shore; the quiet swell
Of harbor waves; slow-swinging harbor bell.—

Before, the grey drift of the open sea,

And something I would follow, calling me.

THE WORSHIPPER

EACH day the temple echoed back his prayer,
And saw the smoke of prayerful sacrifice
In fragrant clouds above the altar rise,
Before the hidden god enshrined there.
Long years in faith he served, nor asked for sign;
And one day, at the altar's foot, he died,
And with new vision saw One draw aside
The altar's veil,—and lo! an empty shrine.

BEING

Too quaintly wrought the knot for all who tried.
Some laughed and flung the mocking thing aside,
And some with patient fingers fumbled on
Until their dull eyes glazed, unsatisfied.

A DREAM OF DEATH

I TREAD on ground that fails beneath my feet,
I strain my eyes at mists of baffling grey,
I stretch out groping hands, the dark to meet,
And call, and hear faint answer far away.

SENTIMENTALIZING IT

A THING that was dear has been torn away;
A comfort is gone out of every day;
The springs of a gladdening love are dry.—
(Well, every dog must sometime die.)

An instant terror,—a choking bark,—
A moment's shuddering fight in the dark
With the Enemy,—silent, conquering.—
(To choke on a bone's a common thing.)

The brass-nailed collar that meant—a run!
The opened gate,—the road in the sun!
A leaping joy at our liberty.—
(A useless thing should be burned, maybe.)

Now a walk is an aimless, limp affair
When a leash isn't pulling you anywhere,
And blankness lies in wait at the door.—
(The paint was badly scratched, before.)

COMRADE-SONG

OH, long is the road that leads over the hill,
The road that is calling us on,—
And in sunshine and storm we follow it still
Till the light of the day is gone.
But 'tis ever a sunlit way for me,
And never a day is long,
When your step with mine on the road swings
free,
And your hand with mine clasps strong.

AN ENEMY HATH DONE THIS

I WATCH you growing dully old, and know
How well he wrought who wronged you, long ago.
He who withheld the birthright,—he would see
Gray age, uncomforted by memory.

A LUTE

I HAVE sold my lute,—
Right brave was I!
I have need to forget that I loved a song;
I have need to make sure that my arm is strong.
I will struggle and learn,
I will labor, and earn,
And the world shall be served of me well, ere long.

What need of the lie?
I hid the lute
For none would buy.

ON LOOKING THROUGH A SET OF HISTORY EXAMINATION PAPERS

DIM figures move across the changing stage,—
Vague forms, half lost in shadow, half defined;
Now and again, one greater, to their mind,
Pushes to foreground,—warrior, priest, or sage.
Now busy peace succeeds to war,—the rage
Of hard-fought battlefields is left behind,
And here are matters of a homely kind,
“Commerce, pursuits and customs of the age.”

Well-trained, these young folk! Facts at fingers’
ends!

The shames and glories of the centuries
Are focussed in the facile book they quote,
And the young judgment blithely apprehends.
A penscratch covers tottering dynasties;
A nation’s downfall makes a schoolgirl’s note.

MARS, HEAR!

Idol of monstrous power,
Lord of the raging hour,—
Hard it is for our lips to name thee thy rightful
name,—
Hard, for our hands have wrought thee titles of
lustrous fame;
Hard, for our dazzled sight has seen thee in glorious
guise;
Hard, for thy worship rings through ages of splend-
id lies,—
How must the prayer be prayed?
How shall thy hand be stayed?

Still must thy breath be drawn of the stench of our
offerings?
Still must thine eyes be fain of bleeding mangled
things?
Still must thy thirst be quenched at the open wounds
of slain?
Still must thy lust be fed with surfeit of innocent
pain?
Idol of monstrous power,
Lord of the furious hour,—

How shall thy might be turned from the path of its
ugly play?

Wrought of our will thou art, and yet know we not
the way!

We who have kissed with tears the stroke of thy
bloody rod

Call to thee, monster-soul we have put in the place
of God,—

How must the prayer be prayed?

How shall thy hand be stayed?

WAR-FEAST

HIGH runs the revel, the rich wine cheers,—
(Red wine, slaughter, and white wine, tears.)

My lord Death is merry, he holds high state,
My lord Pain with him, and my old lord Hate.
The three love laughter; they are hoarse through
 mirth.
My lord Death's whisper bids them look toward
 Earth.

"Hark, friends, the music! The good sound, hear!
The low chord, groaning,—the high shrill, fear.
'Tis loud now as thunder,—the red field's strown.
'Tis soft now, and quavers,—a child cries alone.

"Strains meet for banquets, where rich wine
 cheers.
(Red wine, slaughter, and white wine, tears.)

"How now, ingrates! Your full hearts forget
Him at whose bidding we three friends are met.
Drink we his honour, and his long bright fame!"
—They clink full goblets, and they name that name.

A PAGAN

I AM a pagan, I!

I worship earth, and sun, and sea, and sky.

I know not worse from better form of words,—

My creed is compact of the songs of birds,

And waving grasses, and the sun's glad light,

And strong high hills, and rivers, silver-bright,

And still, soft clouds that wondrously drift by,—

I am a pagan, I!

I never wonder why

All men are born to sin, and then to die.

Only I wonder sometimes, joyously,

Why all the glorious great things should be

That I am part of,—and would somehow praise

The hidden mighty Soul of them always,

The Soul of earth, and sun, and sea, and sky.—

I am a pagan, I!

THE DYING EMPEROR HADRIAN TO HIS SOUL

*(Animula vagula, blandula,
Hospes, comesque corporis,
Quae nunc abibis in loca?—
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,—
Nec, ut soles, dabis iocos.)*

Thou white little tremulous spiritling,
Soul-guest, my earthly companion,
Whither must thou be a-faring—
So pale, unprotected, reluctant?—
Farewell to the jest of existing!

QUINTESSENCE

(To M. E. D.)

OF the rose, sweet breath,
Of the lark, a song;
And of you, the high brave will
For righting wrong.

Of the wild free flame,
Zeal to destroy;
And of you, white pure desire
For others' joy.

L'ENVOI

"Goe, lytel boke!"

Thus Chaucer, ere he laid aside the pen
That made the loves of Cressid burn again,
Humming the while the fragment of an air
Caught from some vagrant golden-tongued *trouvère*.

Thus Spenser, fearful of what should befall
The fragile charms of his new pastoral;
Half wistfully, perhaps, remembering
The note he'd heard his merry master sing.

*Were not my love steeped in humility,
My penny-whistle had not thus made free,
Worshipful masters, of your pleasantry,—
"Goe, lytel boke!"*



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